United Nations A/C.3/53/SR.4

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 November 1998
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hachami ..... (Tunisia)
later: Ms. Sandru (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

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98-81456 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/53/3, A/53/63–S/1998/100, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/97, 294, 350, 356, 378, 416 and 425)

1. **Mr. Kallehauge** (Denmark) said that nearly five years had passed since the General Assembly had adopted the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and that it was time to evaluate to what extent the Rules had been implemented. The disability movement was looking forward to follow-up activities from the Organization to enhance their implementation. The Special Rapporteur on Disability and his panel of experts were doing an excellent job with a very limited budget at their disposal. Denmark, which had donated US$ 100,000 for that work, called on other Governments to contribute.

2. The Commission on Human Rights, at its fifty-fourth session, had adopted resolution 1998/31 on the human rights of persons with disabilities, which provided, *inter alia*, that any violation of the fundamental principle of equality and any discrimination against persons with disabilities was an infringement of their human rights.

3. In honour of the International Day of Disabled Persons in December 1998, the International Disability Foundation would publish a world report on disability. All Governments should call the attention of their experts to that report because awareness of the rights, needs and potential of disabled persons was a precondition for their equal participation, with the rest of society, in the life of the nation.

4. **Ms. Pedersen** (Denmark) said that in spite of all that separated young persons at the cultural, religious, political and economic levels, there were certain qualities that they shared. In the space of a few years, they all faced many challenges. They were vulnerable, often excluded from the decision-making process, particularly in the case of young women that was a violation of their personal freedom and had a negative influence on their development. They were energetic, idealistic and the fact that they were the adults of the future and represented an ever growing sector of the global population, meant that they were a force to be reckoned with.

5. As highlighted during the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in August 1998, young persons were not just a part of the problem, they were also part of the solution. As stated in the Charter of the United Nations and the International Covenants, human rights were of particular concern to young persons. They should be able to play a role in society and should therefore be taught from an early age about democracy, solidarity and tolerance. The United Nations, in cooperation with non-governmental youth organizations, should also place greater emphasis on their rights, and the international community should take greater interest in their problems and potential contribution. Youth participation was a precondition for human development.

6. **Monsignor Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that at the dawn of the third millennium, the world had not yet arrived at a consensus in the social field. The World Summit for Social Development, which had enjoyed the support of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, had nevertheless made it possible to reach consensus on a number of principles to be followed to improve living conditions for all, guarantee the development of society, establish links between human rights and freedom, economic growth, the protection of the environment and well-being for all human beings. The Holy See attached great importance to the World Summit for Social Development and hoped that the commitments made by Heads of State and Government at that forum, in particular in the area of family life, poverty, economic and social development, partnerships with non-governmental organizations and employment, would be fully respected.

7. Conscious of the valuable role that older persons played in society, the Holy See applauded the launching of the International Year of Older Persons, which would provide an opportunity to highlight the talents, wealth of knowledge and experience of that sector of the population and also to demonstrate their needs and reflect on how the world community could respond to them.

8. The Holy See had also participated in the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which had pointed out that future generations would be the beneficiaries of sustainable development. In his Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II stated that life was always a good; there was a need, above all, to see persons with disabilities as people. The United Nations should continue to emphasize the sacred dignity of human life, and the international community should recognize that the family unit offered the greatest protection for the human being. Absolute poverty should moreover be eliminated and the cycle of poverty must be broken.

9. The last decade of the twentieth century would long be remembered as a time of violence and bloodshed. The scars left by ethnic hatred, disregard for human life and armed conflict must heal, and industry, agriculture and trade should be allowed to prosper. The representatives of the international community who would participate in the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development should find solutions to those problems before the work towards social development could continue.

10. Official development assistance was essential. As the basis of the solidarity that was the very nature of humanity, it ensured sustainable development that was inseparable from human rights. Globalization must make it possible to build a society in which everyone could participate.

11. **Mr. Beyendeza** (Uganda) said that he supported the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and commended the successful outcome of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in August 1998 in which his country had participated.

12. The World Summit for Social Development had set the objective of eradicating absolute poverty. The Ugandan Government had identified four ways to achieve that goal: developing human resources through education for all; industrialization and developing the private sector; improving the infrastructure and modernizing the agricultural sector.

13. In many African countries, the outbreak of armed conflict and the scourge of HIV/AIDS had left many young people homeless and deprived of nourishment, health care and education. The family, which was the foundation of any society, was unable to play its traditional role and the phenomena of streetchildren, and the abandonment of disabled and older persons were spreading.

14. Uganda viewed education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty. In 1997, it had launched a universal primary education programme, which practically doubled enrolment. The Government had also established a fund to fight poverty, which would finance a number of social projects, but there was need for additional resources. It therefore launched an appeal to the international community for assistance and was grateful to countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, which had already extended aid in that area. The decentralization of the decision-making process had allowed Uganda to make significant progress over recent years, both in the industrial and agricultural sectors and in education.

15. In conclusion, his delegation wished to stress that the World Summit for Social Development could bear fruit only if the international community honoured its commitments and the United Nations guaranteed follow-up action.

16. **Ms. Gittens-Joseph** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the primary aim of social development should be the promotion of social integration and the participation of all people. Governments, in partnership with civil society and the international community, were responsible for achieving that objective. The financial crisis currently faced by many countries of the world was having a negative impact on the populations of the affected countries, and international agencies, especially the international financial institutions, needed to give more consideration to the social consequences of their policies and programmes.

17. In 1995, the General Assembly had adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which acknowledged that young people were agents, beneficiaries and victims of change and as such should seek not only to be integrated into an existing order but also aim to transform that order. Regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth, such as the one that had recently been held in Lisbon, and the third session of the World Youth Forum, held in Braga, Portugal, in August 1998, had a vital role to play in that respect. States members of CARICOM, sometimes in cooperation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, had launched many programmes to benefit the young people and increase their participation in national development. The aim of such programmes was to create employment opportunities, provide training, reform the educational system and improve the self-image of young people. In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the CARICOM secretariat had organized meetings and activities for young people. It had also requested funding from UNFPA for a major project to encourage the development of entrepreneurship among young people in five countries of the region. Under the leadership of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a number of United Nations agencies were contributing to the implementation of health and family life education programmes in schools.

18. Since young people always had so much to learn from older people, and since interaction between generations should be encouraged, the States members of CARICOM had launched programmes to encourage such interaction. While it was true that increased life expectancy was one of

the greatest achievements of the century, it had also caused unprecedented problems. Women were living longer than men and were often poorer in old age; it was therefore essential to ensure their economic security. The question of ageing and urbanization also required careful study. The Governments of countries in the Caribbean region, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and academic institutions, were actively involved in preparations for the observance of the International Year of Older Persons. Consideration had also been given to the health-care needs of older persons. In 1994, the conference of CARICOM Ministers of Health had approved the Caribbean Health Promotion Charter and, in 1998, the Caribbean Forum on Health and Ageing had been held in the Bahamas. The outcome of the Forum had been a draft charter on health and ageing, which should help countries of the region formulate plans and programmes for older persons, focusing on their economic security and appropriate care facilities.

19. Disabled persons were another group that required special attention. They must be treated on an equal footing with the rest of the population and be able to participate fully in society. Many CARICOM countries had national policies favouring the integration of disabled persons, encouraging their self-reliance and participation in socio-economic development and preventing their marginalization and all forms of discrimination against them.

20. Persons with disabilities, youth and older persons were normally supported by a common social unit, namely, the family. However, the family was being adversely affected by poverty, unemployment, urbanization and the breakdown of the moral and spiritual values that had sustained it. States members of CARICOM had therefore established counselling and training programmes and set up funds to assist needy families, particularly those headed by grandparents.

21. Social development required the integration and the participation of all members of society. The countries members of CARICOM remained committed to the vision of a society for all.

22. **Mr. Seiffert** (Norway) said that the third session of the World Youth Forum and the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in August 1998 in Braga and Lisbon, respectively, had adopted a Youth Action Plan and a declaration that would assist Governments and the United Nations system in promoting the participation of youth at all levels in society.

23. In 1998, the international community had celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nevertheless, such rights continued to be violated in many countries and young persons were frequently the victims of war crimes. The establishment of the International Criminal Court would make it possible to prosecute war criminals, and it was therefore essential for those States that had not yet signed the statute of the Court to do so as soon as possible.

24. Too many young people were still unaware of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the protection offered to them by international human rights conventions and institutions. It would therefore be useful if the United Nations published a compendium of those rights, created a post of United Nations special rapporteur on youth rights, cooperated with non-governmental organizations and took into consideration in all its activities questions relating to youth, in particular by strengthening its youth unit. The participation of young people, who in many countries accounted for more than 50 per cent of the population, was essential to democracy. Young people wished and needed to be part of the political decision-making process and to be represented.

25. Youth organizations had an important role to play in peace- and democracy-building in post-conflict areas. Norwegian organizations were involved in such activities with their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe, Central America, southern Africa and the Middle East. Norway would encourage other Governments to provide youth organizations with the political and financial support that they needed to assist future leaders in strengthening respect for democracy, tolerance and dialogue.

26. For nearly 30 years, Norway had included representatives of youth organizations in its delegations. That practice had two advantages: the youth organizations promoted awareness of United Nations activities, and young people were given an opportunity to take part in the life of the international community. In view of the increasing number of challenges facing the world, the Organization should strengthen its role as a world forum.

27. **Ms. de Bondt** (Netherlands), drawing on her own experience of the increasing ethnic and cultural diversification taking place in most of the world's countries, including the Netherlands, said that young people must be integrated into society, without being denied an opportunity to develop their own identity. The participation of young people belonging to linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities was often hampered by such factors as the discrimination to which they were subjected, language barriers, or the difficulty of finding a job. Young second-generation immigrants, for example, had to live with two

different cultures – one transmitted by the family and one by the society in which they lived – and they faced difficulties that were not well understood by those who had no experience of their situation. That was why they sometimes tended to look for support from those with similar backgrounds, which was often perceived as a sign that they were not open to the rest of society.

28. In order to foster social integration and enable minorities to benefit from the educational system and give them unrestricted access to the labour market, it was important to promote better understanding among all social groups and adopt an open attitude towards minorities. The first step was to recognize that all people had a right to enjoy their own culture, as emphasized in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. States must take appropriate measures to that end in accordance with the relevant international instruments and, in particular, must amend their legislation accordingly. She also stressed the special role of school in integrating minorities since it was there that members of different groups could begin to learn about each other's cultures. However, young people should also be given other opportunities to meet, for example, by participating in sports or the arts or by undertaking joint projects. Governments could provide incentives through clubs and community work and could organize workshops, youth camps and exchange programmes in order to encourage cooperation at the national and international levels.

29. She drew attention to the Braga Youth Action Plan which had been adopted at the third session of the United Nations World Youth Forum, and urged them to study it closely. The Plan of Action had been developed by 500 representatives of non-governmental youth organizations from all over the world and stressed the importance of exchanges of experience between young people from different cultures and religions.

30. **Mr. Melenevs'ky** (Ukraine) said that the current global economic crisis had clearly demonstrated the relationship between social and economic development, which had been stressed at the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995. In Ukraine, the impact of the crisis had led to lower incomes, higher unemployment and other social problems for many people. For that reason, the Government of Ukraine had undertaken urgent measures to ensure social protection of the most vulnerable segments of the population, in particular the aged, retired and disabled persons, and orphans. The purpose of those measures was to provide carefully targeted assistance to those groups by establishing a system of special services at different levels of the country's administrative divisions. Those measures went hand in hand with reform of the social security and pension systems.

31. Ukraine was faced with serious demographic problems that were aggravating its social problems: falling birth rates and an increase in the mortality rate meant that the country could not even sustain its population level. In Ukraine, as in other countries, the problem of an ageing population required the authorities to create more favourable living conditions for older persons. In that regard, the Government of Ukraine welcomed the decision to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, which would provide an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the problems faced by older persons and to seek solutions at the national and international levels. Preparations for the Year were under way in Ukraine: a presidential decree on the health of older persons had been issued in 1997, and a national committee on the observance of the Year of Older Persons had been established by government decree.

32. Like other countries, Ukraine attached great importance to the situation of disabled persons. It had incorporated the provisions of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in a number of State programmes, including a comprehensive programme on the solution of disability problems and a programme to develop the orthopaedic industry and provide disabled persons with means of movement and help them overcome their disabilities by mechanical means. The Government of Ukraine considered that the growing number of non-governmental organizations working on behalf of the disabled would contribute to their rehabilitation and active involvement in society.

33. Ukraine took a great interest in the problems of young people and in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In accordance with a Ukrainian act on the promotion of youth in the social and development fields, the Ukrainian Government had established a network of youth centres. The Ukrainian Parliament was currently considering draft legislation on government bodies responsible for children and youth, and on social work with children and youth. The Ukrainian Government was grateful to the Government of Portugal for hosting the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in August 1998, and welcomed the Organization's contribution to the process of social development through its support for national programmes and provision of technical, consultative and financial assistance, as well as assistance in the field of information. In particular, the Ukrainian Government welcomed the results of the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development and of the

organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives and reaffirmed its sincere desire to continue its constructive dialogue with the various bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations with a view to reforming and revitalizing their work.

34. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that solidarity was a universal concept that had contributed significantly to social development at the national and international levels. The Governments of the countries members of the Group were committed to the development of common policies and strategies for implementing social development programmes on behalf of vulnerable population groups. A large part of the populations of developing countries lived in squalor and poverty, and economic insecurity was increasing in most industrialized countries. While it was true that technological progress, population growth and other factors were of great importance to any economic system, all parties active in world affairs must play a role in their respective fields. Changes must not take place too quickly; they should be the result of reflection, lessons learned and discussion, and it was important to strike a balance between tradition and innovation. The taking of decisions for the common good and, in particular, the provision of financial assistance to poor countries, remained of great importance. By becoming involved in viable enterprises that could be passed on to future generations, generations that would thus be given a means of escaping from poverty, poor people themselves would become less vulnerable. The Rio Group had participated actively in the work of the Commission for Social Development and hoped that the agreed conclusions would provide guidance for Governments in adopting measures at the national, regional and international levels. The Group had also noted with satisfaction that the Commission for Social Development was cooperating with the Commission on Sustainable Development to study poverty and patterns of production and consumption, and that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was helping over 80 countries to adopt strategies to combat poverty. Non-governmental organizations also played an active role by reminding Government of the commitments that they had made in Copenhagen and raising public awareness of related activities.

35. Democracy was the orderly expression of different views, positions and interests. The Rio Group, which was made up of democratic countries, was aware that the concept of common humanity was based on the assumption that all individuals and, in particular, older and disabled persons, had equal opportunities to exercise their rights, assume their responsibilities and make use of all their abilities. The Rio Group was therefore endeavouring to combat the inequalities and other factors that prevented those groups from taking their place in society.

36. Many young people in the region faced common social problems such as delinquency, violence, drug addiction, corruption and a lack of civic responsibility. The concept of good and evil and the values common to all human beings should be inculcated in the minds of young persons. Those values went hand in hand with the diversity of ideas, opinions, customs and ways of life. The members of the Rio Group had actively participated in the recent World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which had been generously hosted by the Portuguese Government from 8 to 12 August 1998 in Lisbon. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, the final document of the Conference, should help Governments to direct their youth policies. The views of young persons expressed in the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted by the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, should also be taken into account.

37. The family could not and should not lose sight of its purpose which was to teach the individual the rules of good conduct and moral principles. It remained the foundation of the human being for the transmission of values and codes of conduct from one generation to another. Because of the information which they spread throughout the world, the media played an increasingly important role in the establishment and dissemination of standards, values and aspirations. The Rio Group fully recognized their power and made them its partners in the search for the means of highlighting the moral, spiritual and intellectual qualities of human beings for the general good of the planet.

38. **Ms. Lacanlale** (Philippines) said that her Government continued to be guided by the Vienna Plan of Action on Ageing within the framework of its long-term national programmes on behalf of older persons and activities in celebration of the International Year of Older Persons. To that end, the Government had issued a Proclamation calling for the nationwide observance of the Year. A task force had been set up for that purpose and a series of major activities had been planned, including public information campaigns to raise awareness, advocacy activities, the adoption of measures aimed at protecting the rights of older persons and the organization of a major conference on ageing.

39. In the Philippines, as in other Asian countries, the family unit was traditionally multi-generational. Despite migration, urbanization and poverty, the family remained the

primary support system and main caregiver for older persons, as laid down in the Constitution. That policy was translated into programmes aimed at providing incentives for families to support older persons in order to help ease the Government's resource burden. In 1995, there were approximately 3.6 million older persons in the Philippines, representing 5.4 per cent of the total population. By the year 2000, that number should reach approximately 5 million. In view of the rapid increase in that population group, its influence on the economic and social development of the country could not be underestimated. The Government had therefore adopted measures to ensure the well-being of older persons: in particular, it had adopted a law aimed at maximizing their contribution to nation-building, which provided, *inter alia*, special privileges in health and transportation services. Another law mandated the establishment of senior citizen centres throughout the country in order to provide venues for social interaction and group activities. In addition, the Government, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, had embarked on a project to draw up a national programme for older persons in order to address the problems relating to the increasing number of older persons who were abandoned or ill-treated, who lived in deplorable conditions, who did not have adequate skills for gainful employment, or who were unable to provide adequate nutrition for themselves or to benefit from health care services. That plan reinforced another major programme of social reform undertaken by the Government which aimed at responding to the basic needs of the poorest and most vulnerable groups of society. Those programmes required vast resources, which, in view of the economic crisis in Asia, were lacking. Even though the Philippines was not as severely affected by the crisis as neighbouring countries, it had nonetheless suffered a sharp increase in the number of unemployed persons, which had risen from 2.5 million in June 1997 to 4.3 million in 1998. Inflation had risen from 4.6 per cent in 1997 to 9.9 per cent in June 1998. The economic downturn had also reduced Government revenue. Those elements, added to the devaluation of the Philippine peso, had led to a huge budget deficit. Despite the lack of resources, the Government was making every effort to avoid a reduction in social spending and was taking measures to support families which were dependent on agriculture and to encourage recourse to microcredit. The private sector had also introduced job retraining seminars for persons who were about to be made redundant.

40. In periods of crisis, people often turned towards the family for support. However, the family was no longer in a position to respond to the needs of older persons. It was therefore crucial to establish a culture of ageing and to regard older persons as both agents and beneficiaries of development efforts. To that end, it was important to adopt measures to encourage the independence and self-reliance of older persons. Particular attention should be paid to health and the accessibility of health resources and to a holistic and long-term strategy for ageing, taking into account the specific circumstances in each country. Non-governmental organizations and the private sector should also cooperate with the Government in the achievement of the goal of a society for all ages.

41. Her delegation wished to thank the Government of Portugal for having hosted the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon, and welcomed the commitments and recommendations contained in the Lisbon Declaration which would contribute to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. She looked forward to its adoption by the General Assembly at its next session.

42. **Ms. Ilham I. M. Ahmet** (Sudan), reaffirmed her Government's commitment to cooperate in the work of the Third Committee, and said that social development was closely linked to economic development, peace and stability. In that regard, the Sudanese Government, within the framework of the efforts it was making to achieve a peaceful solution to the problem of the South, had complied with the ceasefire appeals made by the international community including the Security Council of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the European Union. Nevertheless war continued and the suffering of the people in the area was becoming more intense because the rebels had refused to respect the ceasefire.

43. With regard to issues related to youth, her delegation pointed out that the Lisbon Declaration stressed that Governments should make a commitment to adopt youth policies in line with the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, taking into account the national priorities and specific circumstances of each country. Convinced that youth represented the main driving force for development, her Government had implemented a comprehensive national strategy and defined the criteria to guarantee the rights of youth, as presented during the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system held in Lisbon. In accordance with the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Sudan had also launched activities for the benefit of youth, particularly in the cultural and intellectual spheres, and encouraged young people to do their national service in order to develop their skills. The Government provided greater job opportunities for young people and

supported projects initiated by them by helping them to acquire the necessary resources from financing agencies. Conscious of the importance of education, the Government had established a university in each of the 26 federated States over the past five years. Its efforts had not been limited to the education of youth, but were aimed at achieving the objective of education for all. The Government was also endeavouring to eradicate illiteracy particularly in remote regions. As a consequence, children in all regions had access to primary education and the Government was working towards improving the situation of teachers and had accorded high priority to technical education.

44. A particular concern for Sudan was the situation of older persons and it therefore welcomed the decision to proclaim 1999 the International Year of Older Persons. In accordance with the principles inspired by Islam, older persons in the Sudan enjoyed a privileged and respected position within the family and society. The Government encouraged that approach and stressed the importance of the participation of older persons in production and development on an equal basis with other citizens. The mass media were instrumental in ensuring the wide dissemination of such concepts and norms.

45. The Sudan also strove to achieve the complete integration of persons with disabilities into society. It had therefore established institutes and agencies for the rehabilitation of such persons to provide them with the education and training that they needed in order to attain self-reliance. The Government had conducted media campaigns to raise public awareness and steps had been taken to circulate as widely as possible the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

46. All international conferences emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of the family. The Sudan was of the view that the family should be protected from the social diseases that were rife in the modern world as a result of the tendency in contemporary societies to diminish the role of the family and, indeed, to twist the definition of the term. For the Sudan, the family was the natural framework in which the individual developed in preparation for integration into society. The Government had therefore adopted a policy for facilitating marriage, which was the basis for building a family. It had also paid special attention to the situation of rural and migrant families, and of widows and orphans. Furthermore, it had established national projects for the provision of shelter and clothing to the families affected by the attacks of the rebel army in southern Sudan, where the Government had constructed "peace villages" to meet such families' needs. It had also assisted the victims of the recent floods in the country.

47. Given the deterioration in the world's social situation, the fact that globalization was a reality and the acknowledgement that social development could not be separated from economic development, a comprehensive approach should be adopted in order to address the situation. It was essential, however, to bear in mind that the establishment of a single system that did not acknowledge the different cultures and traditions of each society would not lead to the achievement of social development.

48. **Ms. Martínez** (Ecuador) said that the views of the Government of Ecuador on the item under consideration had already been expressed in the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77, and by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Rio Group. On the eve of the new millennium, the improvement in life expectancy was probably the most striking development in the social sphere. In 1982, at a session of the World Assembly on Ageing, a number of Governments, in particular those of developing countries, had thought that people over the age of 65 were a characteristic of the developed world, but statistics showed that it was in the developing countries that the ageing of the population had increased most rapidly; efforts should therefore be made to ensure a life of dignity for current generations, for instance by the adoption of policies to enable them to participate in productive activities. In that regard, international cooperation, especially through assistance from countries with a highly developed social security system, was of particular importance.

49. Her delegation had played an active part in the work of various intergovernmental bodies which considered the problems of older persons, and welcomed the fact that the theme of the International Year of Older Persons was "towards a society for all ages". As a young country, where 48 per cent of the population was below the age of 18, Ecuador could not be indifferent to the future of such a high proportion of the population. The Government had therefore introduced a programme to raise awareness of third age problems, under which seminars and workshops had been organized at the national, provincial and cantonal levels with the emphasis on the dissemination of information on legislation relating to older persons, and the National Land Transport Council had, *inter alia*, brought in reduced fares for older persons. In addition, plans and programmes to benefit older persons – including a plan to take older persons' rights into account in preparing national policies – had been set up in close coordination with public and private institutions and non-governmental organizations.

50. Her delegation thanked the Portuguese Government for having organized the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth most efficiently. The Government of Ecuador pursued a policy of social involvement under which young people actively participated in their own development. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes and the Braga Youth Action Plan would form part of a strategy of integration into a society for all ages.

51. **Ms. Aponte De Zacklin** (Venezuela) said that her delegation fully supported the statements made by the representative of Panama on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77. She wished, however, to stress the importance of two developments relevant to the situation of the most vulnerable groups, namely the recent World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the issuance of the report on preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294). In organizing its social programme, Venezuela aimed to improve living conditions for such groups, while at the same time working to ensure economic development, justice and peace.

52. With regard to young people, a foundation had been established to carry out programmes aimed at giving them the skills to find innovative solutions to their problems. Two programmes seemed particularly promising: the first – the youth employment plan – sought to give training opportunities to young school drop-outs and to make full use of the country's human resources in order to create favourable conditions for the full development of young people, while at the same time laying the foundation for a more just and equitable society in Venezuela. The aim of the second – the prevention and participation programme for young people – was to set up a network of activities in order to give young people responsibility in training and changing the individual and society. The two programmes had produced good results in a number of fields, including the prevention of juvenile crime, drug addiction, AIDS, violence, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and alcoholism among the young. Her country had also promoted parallel social integration measures, such as the "Sport for all" programme and the National Children's Symphony Orchestra.

53. With regard to programmes for older persons, her delegation commended the Consultative Group for the International Year of Older Persons on its efforts to promote the Year. Her country had embarked on programmes to help older persons, including the national plan for the third age. That plan was being implemented by the National Geriatric and Gerontological Institute, which provided various services to older persons throughout the country. In urban areas, courses were provided for older persons, enabling them to re-enter the productive sector and thus preserve the country's cultural heritage and traditions. The concept of a society for all ages, every aspect of which was covered by the Secretary-General's report (A/53/294), could be seen as a first step in a dialogue between the ephemeral – vanity, power, youth and, indeed, life – and the eternal – the spirit, the vital principle which acted as a guide from the beginning of a person's life to the end.

54. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) said that social questions were central to international politics, as abundantly proved only recently by the financial crisis in Asia and its unexpected impact on the living conditions of millions of individuals, both in the region itself and in other parts of the world. No sector was spared the negative repercussions of globalization and no one was shielded from the threats of impoverishment that were the regrettable concomitants of this process. It was therefore essential to seek, both internationally and within the framework of the United Nations, global responses that were capable of addressing the challenges facing humankind, just as it was also essential to fight as a team against poverty. The Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development continued to serve as common references in view of their relevance and currency. With the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for the year 2000 in mind, the implementation and follow-up of commitments entered into by Governments should undergo critical assessment. His delegation was determined to make its contribution, in the Preparatory Committee, to the success of that important gathering.

55. He welcomed the outcome of the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and thanked the Portuguese Government for having taken the initiative to organize it, in conjunction with the United Nations, particularly since it had culminated in a consensus on youth issues, as evidenced by the Lisbon Declaration on Youth, which fell within the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond adopted by the General Assembly. It equally welcomed the Secretary-General's report on preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294), which should successfully reaffirm the place and role of older persons in a society that must remain "a : ciety for all ages". Advantage should therefore be taken of the opportunity provided by the commemoration of the Year in 1999 to reaffirm the 18 United Nations principles for Older Persons annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/91, as well as the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which could inspire countries to set their objectives on the subject of ageing. Senegal, which was already engaged in preparations for the

Year, believed that the resources available to the Trust Fund for Ageing should be strengthened with a view to enabling the developing countries to benefit from the necessary technical assistance.

56. Realization of the objectives of social development presupposed a greater degree of participation by the population in civil, political and cultural life, as well as the strengthening of the status of law and democracy and the promotion of a social-integration policy. It further presupposed a policy of combating vulnerability and poverty with productive employment, in addition to the development of microcredit, easier access to basic social services and a profound ongoing dialogue between the State, non-governmental organizations and civil society concerning implementation of the objectives fixed at the World Summit for Social Development. Moreover, it required that the social dimension should be taken into account in economic and financial restructuring and adjustment programmes. The international community should mobilize fresh resources in order to meet the expectations of peoples who were victims of malnutrition and disease and to wage an effective fight against poverty. Senegal, which already had a national programme in that field, believed that the United Nations should gear its action more towards development and solidarity among nations.

57. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) said that he particularly regretted the negative trends in the world social situation (highlighted by the Human Development Report 1998 of the United Nations Development Programme), as his country believed that sustained economic growth and employment generation were two basic elements for the promotion of social integration and societal harmony. He hoped that the Lisbon Declaration on Youth, adopted at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, would serve as the flagship of active youth participation in development at the national, regional and international levels. Pakistan itself laid special emphasis on the provision of quality education and professional training for its youth in order to prepare them for playing a productive role in building the nation. It had also prioritized the expansion of job opportunities for youth. In its eighth five-year plan, over 5 million additional jobs would be created and similar emphasis on job creation would continue in the next five-year plan.

58. It was predicted that the ageing of the population, a consequence of scientific and technological development, would be faster in the developing countries than in the developed countries. The International Year of Older Persons would provide an opportunity to evaluate the likely impact of that demographic change on societies. With 40 per cent of its population now in its teens, Pakistan would be more acutely affected by the ageing process and it had therefore already initiated a public awareness campaign. Traditionally, the family shouldered the responsibility for older persons, who were regarded as the fountainhead of wisdom, experience and guidance, rather than as a burden. The Government nevertheless assisted families through special incentives to ensure the care of older people. Various old-age benefit schemes, including pensions, had been instituted to ensure income security for older people.

59. His Government had introduced numerous measures to integrate disabled persons, the most vulnerable section of the population; it had launched awareness-raising campaigns and set up institutions that would impart skills to disabled persons in order to make them productive partners in development. Special quotas had also been reserved for them in the public and private sectors, while safety nets had been developed for marginalized groups and those who had been by-passed or adversely affected by economic and social change. Four social-support schemes were now in operation for the benefit of various categories of the most disadvantaged social groups.

60. Viewing education as a vehicle for the promotion of human development and the alleviation of poverty, Pakistan had launched a social-action programme in 1997, in which special emphasis was laid on elementary and secondary education. By the year 2010, it proposed to achieve the target of 99 per cent enrolment for boys and 93 per cent enrolment for girls at the elementary level. A compulsory-education act was already being implemented in Punjab province and was about to be introduced in other provinces.

61. *Ms. Sandru (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

62. **Mr. Gambari** (Nigeria) said that his country was extremely concerned by the increasing neglect of older persons, especially in the developing countries, where the deteriorating economic circumstances were a contributing factor. It had therefore created a social welfare department and a rehabilitation department. It had also initiated a family support programme which, in addition to assisting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society, promoted the well-being of the family with a view to enabling its members to make the maximum contribution to national development. The programme's specific objective was to eradicate negative social and cultural factors that affected the elderly and to address any discrepancies that might exist between older men and older women. Given that the majority of older persons worldwide were women, as acknowledged by the Secretary-General in his report on preparations for the

International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294), it was imperative that global activities during that Year should give due consideration to the peculiar problems which older persons faced. His delegation particularly welcomed part III of the report, which underscored the importance attached to the family as a whole in order to achieve a society for all ages. The alarming consequences of the tempo of ageing in the developing countries was also clearly indicated. In Nigeria, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, the focal point of preparation for the International Year, had organized, in conjunction with non-governmental organizations, a special seminar on the role of the aged in national development. The Ministry would also be elaborating a programme of activities as a follow-up to the official observance, on 2 October 1998, of the International Day of Older Persons.

63. In connection with youth, who were important to the establishment of a society for all ages, Nigeria had been effectively represented at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. It welcomed its successful outcome and was fully committed to implementing, with like-minded members of the international community, the programmes contained in the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, as well as the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted by the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System in August 1998.

64. **Mr. Nikiforov** (Russian Federation) said that, over four years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, States still faced serious problems, both objective and subjective, in implementing the provisions thereof.

65. Despite its difficult economic situation, the Russian Government was endeavouring to attenuate the adverse social consequences of the crisis, prevent the standard of living from falling, partially compensate for the losses suffered by the most vulnerable population groups and support the most needy members of society. It was endeavouring to take into account the basic guidelines established at the World Summit for Social Development and, to that end, had launched a federal programme of social reforms to be implemented by the year 2000 as well as special programmes on behalf of young people, children, older persons, families and the disabled, which, unlike preceding programmes, included practical, realistic goals.

66. However, his Government considered that, in addition to efforts at the national level, assistance from the international community and, above all, from the United Nations, was essential. By ensuring the universality of the multilateral trade system and of stable, predictable conditions for access to international markets in goods and services, particularly for countries in transition, and by eliminating all forms of trade discrimination, it would be easier to resolve social problems. There was also a need for an international monitoring mechanism to ensure greater compliance with bilateral regulations and obligations in that area. The Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization (A/53/1), had emphasized the need to renew international economic cooperation for development through partnership, an idea supported by the Russian Federation.

67. With respect to international action in the social field, Russia had given its immediate support to the idea of holding a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, and was participating actively in the work of the Preparatory Committee out of a conviction that that session would promote the development of strategies and programmes on behalf of vulnerable population groups. In that regard, it welcomed preparations for the International Year of Older Persons and the United Nations Secretariat's work on the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

68. The Russian Federation, for its part, had established a national committee responsible for preparations for the Year. To that end, the Commonwealth of Independent States had created an organizational committee pursuant to a decision taken by the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth in March 1998.

69. The Russian Federation also welcomed the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in 1998. However, the Russian Government was convinced that there remained unexploited opportunities for coordination within the United Nations at the system-wide level in implementation of the decisions taken at the World Summit. In particular, the Commission for Social Development could provide greater support for the implementation efforts of interested countries. Better use could also be made of the capacities of non-governmental organizations. In that respect, the Russian Federation supported measures aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the Commission for Social Development by strengthening its role, particularly in the area of monitoring the implementation of decisions.

70. In conclusion, his delegation supported efforts to ensure that international cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations focused more closely on social issues and that the organization's activities gave a higher priority to

such issues. It was ready to cooperate for that purpose with the United Nations and all interested countries.

71. **Mr. Miller** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO had participated actively in the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and fully supported the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes and the Braga Youth Action Plan adopted by the World Youth Forum, both of which focused on various questions of direct interest to ILO. The Lisbon Declaration, in particular, was aimed at increasing employment opportunities for young people and at taking steps to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

72. ILO was working towards a convention intended to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including all forms of slavery, child prostitution and the use of children for illegal activities or for work likely to jeopardize their health, safety and future; the convention was expected to be adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1999.

73. In June 1998, the International Labour Conference had adopted a resolution on youth employment which called on member States to take measures to increase employment opportunities for young people while ensuring employment protection for them. There was also a need for an international strategy for youth employment and for dissemination of best-practice information in that area. The Conference had also adopted a Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work, which stressed that all member States had an obligation to respect, promote and realize the principles concerning fundamental rights at work which were the subject of ILO conventions on freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. That declaration should make it possible to improve working conditions for young people and to promote their meaningful participation in social and economic development.

74. The question of youth employment was closely related to that of the provision of social security and protection to older persons. ILO fully subscribed to General Assembly resolution 47/5, which had proclaimed 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons; it was involved in the problems of older workers and, for that reason, focused particularly on social-protection systems and retirement-pension schemes. It had noted with concern that many countries needed to reform their old-age pension systems, or, where none existed, to establish new ones. It therefore provided its members with advice and assistance with respect to the various alternatives and their merits and disadvantages and their suitability to the circumstances and traditions of each country, taking into account the principles embodied in international labour standards.

75. With respect to disabled persons, ILO Convention No. 159 (1983) on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons emphasized the right of those persons to vocational or other training which would provide them with employment opportunities and required member States to design and adopt policies to facilitate disabled persons' access to employment. To that end, ILO provided guidance and technical assistance to its members. Moreover, in its *World Employment Report, 1998–1999*, ILO had stressed the need to provide training for disabled workers, youth, the long-term unemployed and older displaced workers as the most vulnerable groups in the labour market in order to improve their employment prospects.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/53/SR.5

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
1 December 1998
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hachani ..... (Tunisia)

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98-81474 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Agenda Item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/53/3, A/53/63-S/1998/100, A/53/72-S/1998/156, A/53/95-S/1998/311, A/53/97, A/53/294, A/53/350, A/53/356, A/53/378, A/53/416 and A/53/425)

1. **Mr. Nuanthasing** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the objectives set at the World Summit for Social Development were far from having been attained despite various efforts undertaken at national, regional and international levels. According to the UNDP Human Development Report for 1998, social problems were most acute in the developing countries. Their solution required concerted and coordinated actions at the national and international levels. In order to attain the objectives embodied in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, social development must be based on sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Lao People's Democratic Republic had accordingly identified eight national priority programmes, two of which, on human resources development and rural development, were designed to fight the root causes of poverty. The aim was to provide vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized people in rural and remote areas with access to transport, local markets, appropriate technology, microcredits, etc., in order to enhance their social integration and their participation in the development process.

2. The situation of young people in the world continued to be a source of concern, despite the success of the policies and programmes undertaken by many countries. The Lisbon Declaration contained ideas that could be a source of inspiration for national authorities responsible for youth. The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union was involved actively in the formulation of national youth education, health and employment programmes.

3. The approaching International Year of Older Persons provided an opportunity to discuss the building of a society for all ages. The Lao Government attached great importance to the problems of older persons, and had issued a decree under which it would provide housing or building materials to older persons, especially pensioners.

4. However, the Government lacked resources for implementing its social policy and needed financial and technical assistance from the international community.

5. **Ms. Ghimire** (Nepal) said that the social and economic situation in the world was now grimmer than it had been in the past three decades because of unemployment, social exclusion and disintegration of structures, particularly in developing countries. In a world of plenty, the spectre of war, famine and mass exodus still haunted millions of people. Those scourges all had economic, social, political and cultural dimensions. Only concerted actions at the international level would make it possible to overcome them. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the struggle against poverty should be a priority for the international community, including the United Nations system, the multilateral financial institutions and regional organizations. In that context Nepal welcomed the commitment to reduce world poverty by half by the year 2015, as well as the decision of the General Assembly, at its previous session, to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in the year 2001, and hoped that the Conference would make it possible to reverse the tendency to marginalize the least developed countries and to promote their development.

6. Nepal had spared no effort in mobilizing youth for national development. The World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth had contributed to identifying and broadening the areas of communication and cooperation between the young of different countries.

7. The international community should continue to adopt viable strategies to improve the circumstances of older persons. Nepal had initiated a modest programme of financial support to older persons and the disabled so as to promote social integration and cohesion. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector must extend unfailing support to the United Nations programmes on ageing in the context of the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons.

8. **Mr. Bocalandro** (Argentina) said that the current critical social situation which was due to unsuitable industrial structures, excessive bureaucracy and structural adjustments had been aggravated by the international financial crisis. It required a new relationship between the State and the individual, who had to play an active part in the taking of decisions which affected his well-being. In the past decade Argentina had undertaken a thorough-going transformation of its economy and a State reform which had enabled it to record strong economic growth as a result of increased participation in economic activity by the private sector, women and other social groups. However, internal and external factors had caused an increase in unemployment. Vulnerability and social exclusion had become the gravest social problems, added to which were the negative effects of globalization. The current financial crisis was one example of that new global reality. It was

therefore necessary to adopt policies of institutional reform and training to prepare people to face up to the new realities of globalization.

9. The demographic situation, market changes, retirement regimes, poverty and the increase in life expectancy required that special attention be given to the question of ageing both at the national and at the international levels. Argentina had initiated a programme for vulnerable groups of the population and a national plan for older persons. Its social policy was aimed at integrating into public structures social activities complementary to those of the private sector. Investing in the human factor was a vital element of that policy.

10. **Mr. Wilmot** (Ghana) said that in spite of the collective commitment made at the World Summit for Social Development, the social situation in the world remained deplorable because of the inequitable international economic system. Debt servicing absorbed resources which the countries of the third world could otherwise have used to finance their social development. His delegation commended the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for having included in its work programme consideration of the effects of external debt, globalization and structural adjustment programmes. His delegation also subscribed to the recommendations drawn up by the Commission for Social Development regarding the promotion of social integration.

11. At the national level, the Government of Ghana was promoting social integration and participation of all in the development process through district assemblies which were the bedrock of the country's decentralization system.

12. The efforts being made to promote relationships between the generations and to create opportunities for older persons to participate in socio-economic life contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development. His delegation welcomed the celebration of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999, but regretted that the problems of older persons in rural areas which had been deprived of their young people through rural exodus, particularly in the third world, had not been reflected in the preparations for the Year.

13. The social integration of young people and the disabled also deserved special attention. A draft national youth policy giving effect to the recommendations of the Lisbon Declaration had been submitted to the Government.

14. In conclusion, he recalled the need to underline the importance of the family as the fundamental unit of society.

15. **Mr. Calovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the United Nations played a role of paramount importance in the efforts that were being made at the international level to support national social policy. Globalization required the adoption of common standards of social development. The severe social crisis that was being experienced in many countries as a result of financial turbulence, the external environment and their inability to eradicate poverty should force the international community to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action more resolutely. The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development was the right opportunity for that purpose.

16. The transformation of the political and economic system had created various social problems, but the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had managed to continue its social development, without major crises, and in particular to reduce unemployment and concentrate efforts on social protection, with the cooperation of the international community, particularly UNICEF.

17. The recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294) would help promote the concept of "a society for all ages" in which older persons played an important role in the education and advancement of the family. He stressed the importance of the Lisbon Declaration, and of the Action Plan adopted at the Third World Youth Forum, which aimed to encourage the participation of young people in the development of society.

18. Measures also needed to be taken at the national and international levels for the benefit of the disabled so as to help them participate in productive and useful activities in society.

19. Since it was impossible to consider social development separately from economic, political and cultural development, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had set itself the goal of successful integration into the common European social system.

20. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that the issues considered at the World Summit for Social Development were more topical than ever because the disparities between countries and between population groups had been exacerbated by the effects of the deterioration of the terms of trade, indebtedness, the decline in official development assistance and the malfunctioning of the international economic system, which had been aggravated by unbridled globalization, as the dramatic Asian crisis had demonstrated. Once considered an engine of prosperity, globalization was proving to be a

factor of impoverishment and exclusion which called for a coordinated response by the international financial institutions, supported by the United Nations.

21. Economic development must be accompanied by social development and respond first of all to the needs of the family, but also to those of young people and older persons. That was why, since gaining independence, Algeria had placed the social dimension at the heart of its development policy, based on the promotion of the principles of social justice, national solidarity and the preservation of entitlements. Algeria attached great importance to the family as was demonstrated by the establishment of a ministry for national solidarity and the family and a national committee for the preservation and promotion of the family which was responsible for promoting information programmes, community activities, special programmes for disadvantaged social categories and solidarity measures.

22. The public authorities were particularly sensitive to the problems of youth, which represented 70 per cent of the population: education and training programmes absorbed one third of the State budget. Schooling was free and compulsory, and medicine was free. Measures had been taken to promote the employment of young people.

23. The protection of the disabled and of older persons was guaranteed under the Constitution. In order to implement that provision, his Government had adopted a programme designed to expand employment opportunities and ensure equality of opportunity as well as access to rehabilitation and other services.

24. With regard to older persons, the Constitution placed an obligation on children to help their parents. In addition to health care and retirement facilities, older persons received social assistance (allowances or services in specialized institutions).

25. Algeria planned to celebrate the International Year of Older Persons by establishing a broad intersectoral programme including seminars, study sessions and symposiums, meetings between young people and older persons, debates with the press, the formulation of a strategy for communication on the pathologies of the third age and intergenerational links, the study of a specific law on the protection of older persons, the establishment of a data bank and the production of a poster.

26. **Mr. Seksenbayev** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan's social policy needed to be seen within the context of the profound changes which had taken place in the context of the democratization of Kazakh society. Social problems must be seen within the context of economic development and sustainable human development, and of the economic and social situation in the world. His Government, on the basis of the decisions adopted at the World Summit for Social Development and other international conferences, was implementing a series of economic and social measures aimed particularly at young people, older persons, the disabled and the family.

27. His delegation welcomed the decision to proclaim 1999 the International Year of Older Persons. It welcomed the new approaches to the problem of ageing and the desire to improve the situation of older persons, and thereby contribute to achieving the objective of the Year: "Towards a society for all ages". During the Year, the international community must strive to find specific means of attaining that objective.

28. A preparatory committee had been established in the context of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with a view to celebrating the Year. Kazakhstan had drawn up a programme envisaging, *inter alia*, a set of measures to assist older persons living alone who were not able to work. National commissions had been established for that purpose, the financing modalities for the programme had been established, and a benevolent fund was to be set up for the most disadvantaged older persons.

29. His Government felt that, despite practical difficulties, it was essential to protect the rights of the most disadvantaged groups, particularly the disabled, who, moreover, were mostly older persons. To that end, priority action must be defined, on the basis of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The decision adopted on 15 June 1993 by the President of Kazakhstan to proclaim the second Sunday of October each year the national day for the disabled demonstrated the importance which Kazakhstan attached to that question. One of the priority objectives was to integrate the disabled into productive activities. It was also important to ensure their access to education, culture, leisure, sports activities, employment and transportation, and to establish rehabilitation centres. It had to be recognized that a number of economic difficulties were preventing Kazakhstan from adopting the legislative provisions necessary to enable the disabled to have unrestricted access to the social infrastructure.

30. One of the significant events of 1998 was the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, organized by the Government of Portugal in cooperation with the United Nations. The Conference had made it possible to take up a number of questions relating to youth, draw up new guidelines and strengthen cooperation between Governments

and all the other actors working to help youth in the world. The adoption of the Lisbon Declaration and the Braga Youth Action Plan was also a step in the right direction.

31. His delegation drew attention to the need to offer young people more employment and training opportunities, since lack of education was one of the main factors hindering social development. The establishment of conditions to enable young people to receive high quality education, the development of small businesses and the emergence of the middle class, which would be formed from today's youth, were among the priorities of the development strategy to the year 2030 drawn up by his Government. Lastly, his delegation reaffirmed its desire to cooperate with all the parties concerned to achieve the objectives of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the International Year of Older Persons.

32. **Mr. Danesh-Yazdi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), stressing that the Third Committee should attach greater importance to the social crisis arising from the deteriorating economic situation in many countries, said that the family was the basic unit of society and, as such, should be supported at both the national and the international level. To that end, therefore, the Secretary-General should strengthen the capacity of the Questions on the Family unit of the Secretariat.

33. His Government welcomed the decision to designate 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. In his country, the Welfare Organization provided special assistance to older persons in need. As Iran was an Islamic country, older persons held a place of honour in society and were treated with compassion and humanity, values for which scientific and technical progress could not substitute.

34. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, young people had a vital role to play, and all issues relating to them must be addressed in an international context. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond were very useful in that regard. His Government, mindful of the need for educated, informed, creative and healthy young people capable of participating in the formulation of development plans, decision-making processes and the preservation of peace, had established a Supreme Council of Youth, implemented a National Youth Policy and promoted education.

35. Stress should be laid on the threat which drug abuse posed to the entire international community. No single Government could combat the drug menace alone; only concerted efforts could achieve results. The United Nations should coordinate those efforts.

36. His Government stood ready to cooperate with the international community in all fields related to social development; it was actively involved in the preparatory process for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

37. **Ms. Bennani** (Morocco) said her delegation was convinced that social development must be based on the promotion of human rights, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, social justice and respect for diversity. Her Government was thus endeavouring, in collaboration with civil society and taking advantage of economic growth, to ensure the social integration of disabled and elderly persons, the protection of children and the promotion of fundamental rights. It had drawn up a five-year social adjustment plan targeting those who had failed to benefit from growth, namely, the rural and disadvantaged populations, and had implemented policies to encourage the establishment of small enterprises that could partially resolve the employment crisis and alleviate poverty.

38. On the threshold of the new millennium, young people must be able to meet the challenges of globalization, economic liberalization and the revolution in communications; her Government had taken a number of initiatives on behalf of youth, namely, development of the youth movement, creation of the National Council for Youth and the Future, establishment of an employment promotion programme for young graduates, improvement of living conditions for young people and measures to combat their exclusion, adoption of policies to promote the creation of youth enterprises, participation in the drafting of the Lisbon Declaration, and so on.

39. Population ageing constituted another challenge. The economic and social protection and the specific rights and needs of elderly persons, particularly women, were pressing questions. The International Year of Older Persons should make it possible to adopt concrete measures to promote their integration and participation. For its part, her Government had drawn up an action programme based on the strengthening of family ties.

40. The report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the International Year to be held in 1999 (A/53/294), which recommended, *inter alia*, the elimination of stereotyping and the utilization of the experience of elderly persons, fully reflected her Government's views.

41. **Mr. Suh Dae-Won** (Republic of Korea) said that the recommendations contained in the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, could be the basis for national strategies to

protect elderly persons. The 18 United Nations Principles for Older Persons, adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, also provided useful guidance.

42. With regard to the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294), his Government wished to state that it did not regard older persons as a social burden. While it was true that population ageing had a negative socio-economic impact, it was also true that older persons had experience and knowledge to their credit that could benefit other population groups. In order to facilitate the continued employment of older persons, Governments must subsidize companies which agreed to employ them for their loss of earnings. A law to that effect had already been promulgated in his country. Secondly, efforts to promote the well-being of older people had fallen short of their goals. Accordingly, there was a need to adopt a more comprehensive and integrated approach aimed at cultivating individual potential throughout an entire lifespan. Thirdly, older women must be empowered; to that end, women must take their rightful place in society from the earliest possible age.

43. The Commission for Social Development had decided at its thirty-sixth session to request the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to explore with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the feasibility of including an ageing-related development index in the Human Development Report. Given the success of the Human Development Index and the Gender Development Index, his delegation supported that initiative, which it believed would attract attention from Governments and the media to issues of ageing. His delegation requested the Secretariat to keep the Committee informed of new developments in that area.

44. Despite the current economic difficulties, his Government continued to focus on the problems of the elderly. It had established a Preparatory Committee for the International Year of Older Persons and a focal point within the Ministry of Health and Welfare. It also welcomed the adoption on 1 October 1998 of the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, as well as the active involvement of non-governmental organizations in the preparations for the International Year.

45. Older persons represented the collective memory of the twentieth century; they were a repository of knowledge and competence to be transmitted to future generations. It was incumbent upon the States Members of the United Nations to ensure that such valuable human resources were not wasted.

46. **Ms. Al-Hamami** (Yemen) said that the item under consideration concerned problems faced by all societies, in both developed and developing countries. Accordingly, there was a need to establish comparable standards and to promote cooperation between the international community, United Nations programmes and global populations with a view to implementing mechanisms suited to the characteristics of various societies.

47. Like other developing countries, Yemen had only limited means. In the social sphere, her Government had adopted measures on behalf of children and the family: the creation of a Department of Social Development within the Ministry of Development in 1990, the institution of a social welfare system and the setting up of a social development and employment fund and a small-enterprise promotion service in 1997. The authorities were thus assisting the population, particularly the elderly, disabled persons and children, to improve their living conditions.

48. Her country, which suffered from poverty and unemployment, had developed a national strategy centred on three major themes: job creation, particularly for the most disadvantaged; strengthening of the social welfare system; and strengthening of the social development and employment fund and the small-enterprise promotion service.

49. The Republic of Yemen was currently carrying out financial and administrative reforms in order to further social development, particularly among the poor, the disabled, older persons and orphans. It sought to help large, low-income families by expanding productive activities and investment projects.

50. Despite the economic difficulties and the scarce resources, the local population came to the aid of disadvantaged groups and was undertaking many sizeable projects funded in part by non-governmental organizations, international organizations and friendly countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

51. The Government of Yemen endorsed the Secretary-General's statements in paragraph 77 of his report (A/53/294), to the effect that a society for all ages must be promoted by emphasizing the interdependence of the life stages, the inter-connectedness of generations and the interdependence of individuals and society. That strategy was compatible with the Shariah, which advocated solidarity within society, mutual respect within families, obedience to adults and especially older adults, and care for children and the disabled. Yemeni society, like other Muslim societies, applied those principles and gave particular attention to older persons, who stayed with their families until they died.

52. On the occasion of the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons, which would be

observed beginning in October 1999, Yemen hoped that the international community would do everything possible to enable the elderly to participate in economic, social and cultural rights. Older persons, children and the disabled had to be helped, particularly those under occupation or sanctions and prey to disease, hunger or natural disasters.

53. **Ms. Kimlíková** (Slovakia) commended the Secretary-General for his report on the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (A/53/294). She found the section on networking, research and information exchange (sect. IV.D, pp. 16–18) particularly interesting.

54. Her Government had in 1998 discussed a report on social security and health protection for older persons. The ageing of the population as a result of a low birth rate or longer life expectancy or both had a considerable economic and social impact, especially on the labour force, pension systems, intergenerational solidarity, health services and public services in general. Slovakia was seeking to move away from State paternalism to a fair society for all and to promote the social and economic rights of its citizens, especially the elderly. Its main aim was to have them keep their self-sufficiency and dignity and allow them to remain as long as possible in their own families and communities.

55. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/80, her Government had established a coordinating centre for the preparation of the International Year of Older Persons and, at the local level, working groups for the same purpose. The activities being carried out were based on United Nations principles and focused on education, media policy, publicity, science, research and social and economic conditions. The Slovak institutions dealing with older persons were intensifying their cooperation with comparable institutions in other European countries.

56. In a "society for all ages", young people clearly also had a role to play. The world's youth made up approximately one fifth of the population and it was essential to invest in youth in order to sustain economic development. Slovakia's policy was to promote the independence of young people, their sense of responsibility and their readiness to participate in the life of society, and there were currently about 300 associations in the country working with young people and children.

57. Slovakia welcomed the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and its Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, which offered a good basis for action on behalf of young people. It also welcomed the plan to hold a special session of the General Assembly in Geneva in the year 2000, devoted to implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

58. **Mr. Ahmad** (Malaysia), referring to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for Social Development, said that his Government's five-year plan allocated 29.3 per cent of public expenditure to the social sector, to fund measures and programmes in keeping with the focus of the World Summit. A social action master plan had been put in place.

59. The percentage of the Malaysian population living in absolute poverty had dropped from 60 per cent in 1970 to 13.5 per cent in 1990, and the target was to bring it down to 5.5 per cent in the year 2000. Malaysia attached great importance to the Lisbon Declaration and was committed to ensuring that the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 was fully implemented.

60. New approaches were required in developing youth programmes to allow young people to acquire the skills required by the fast pace of economic and technological development and to contribute to nation-building. That was one of the objectives of the seventh five-year plan, which also put emphasis on the inculcation of moral and spiritual values among young people. Believing that the active participation of young people in sports and cultural activities could help reduce the social problems, Malaysia had hosted the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

61. Malaysia saw the family as the basic unit of society and recognized the increased demands that modernization made on families. It had therefore established a national high-level inter-agency committee to address social problems, starting at the level of the family. It would continue to implement various family development programmes. It believed that women must acquire the necessary skills in that connection, and had begun to educate the public on the need for men and women to share family responsibilities.

62. Ageing was an issue for all countries. The observance in 1999 of the International Year of Older Persons, with the theme "Towards a society for all ages" would give the international community an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the International Plan of Action on Ageing. In Malaysia, preparation for ageing was an integral part of the social and economic development policies. Tax relief was provided to help keep older people in their families, and there were homes for indigent older persons without families. Malaysia had helped to set up or rebuild four retirement homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

63. Malaysia was also engaged in integrating the disabled into society by providing education, training and rehabilitation programmes and offering them the technical

training that would help them to gain economic independence. It encouraged non-governmental organizations to provide social services to the disabled.

64. Only through genuine partnership and cooperation between national Governments, the international community and non-governmental organizations could the issues relating to youth, the family, older persons and the disabled be successfully addressed.

65. **Mr. Tabone** (Malta) said that not only must the rights of the older generation be safeguarded but it must be allowed to play its role within society. Older persons deserve respect and love.

66. In Malta, the Department for the Elderly, under the Ministry of Social Policy, paid special attention to them. It sought to improve their health, allow them to continue living at home as long as possible or, failing that, in appropriate institutions, and to help them to remain active. Malta had also set up a very popular university for senior citizens. His Government was currently discussing with trade unions and the private sector a reform of the pension system. The plan was to introduce a parallel system of private pension schemes alongside the State system.

67. Malta's International Institute on Ageing, to which the Government had contributed over $250,000 a year and which was governed by an agreement between the United Nations and Malta (Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/41), was doing remarkable work. It served as a bridge for the collection, exchange and dissemination of information on ageing and encouraged network-building and the establishment of focal points for training needs in connection with ageing. Since more and more countries, particularly developing countries, were witnessing an ageing of the population, training was of paramount importance. Working together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Institute had over the past 10 years offered courses in demography, health care, income security and social gerontology and soon hoped to use distance-learning technologies. The United Nations should consider granting a more formal status to the Institute.

68. Malta was also providing for its disabled population and had just submitted a bill to improve the living conditions of the disabled. The proposed legislation sought to eliminate discrimination against them and to create public awareness that the disabled are entitled to dignity and had to be treated on an equal footing with other citizens and be allowed to participate in the life of the community.

69. Governments should treat all citizens impartially and fairly and provide benefits and assistance to those who really needed them. They should also do more to improve occupational health and the quality of social services.

70. **Ms. Banerjee** (India) said that India attached particular importance to the theme of the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages. While age categorizations were necessary for statistical and planning purposes, the concerns of older persons and of young people should be addressed in the context of a society for all ages. While the Lisbon Declaration was to be commended for identifying the full participation of youth in decision-making and in the life of society as a priority, the problem of youth unemployment required urgent attention, particularly since the deliberations of the World Bank painted such a gloomy picture of the world economy. Youth unemployment, which often led to alienation, violence and terrorism, posed a major challenge to social integration. The problem had become all the more intractable as a result of demographic ageing, which had led the Indian Government to raise the retirement age for civil servants from 58 to 60. Such decisions to extend the working lives of older persons should not, however, result in "generational war". Both young people and older persons could find employment opportunities in the informal sector, which was not constrained by the laws governing the retirement age. Her delegation proposed that the follow-up to the Social Summit should focus on youth unemployment, an issue made all the more urgent by the prevailing social and economic climate, particularly in developing countries.

71. Referring to the important points which emerged from the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the International Year of Older Persons, she said that her delegation was particularly pleased to note that the Secretary-General had given priority to promoting investments in human development and to the concept of "a society for all ages".

72. Although attitudes towards older persons varied, comprehensive multilateral action was required. The current Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had noted that demographic ageing was unlikely to be confined to his country. The increase in life expectancy in most countries necessitated programmes and activities for which the United Nations could offer inspiration. However, it was important to remember, as had been highlighted in the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation, that there were many countries where life expectancy had actually fallen, principally as a result of AIDS and war. It was important to strike a balance between meeting the needs of those blessed with a longer life and the needs of those who had no guarantee of reaching adulthood. Age was neither a reward nor a liability, but part

of the larger freedom which the Charter of the United Nations pledged to the peoples of the world.

73. **Mr. Gubarevich** (Belarus) said that, at a time of world upheaval, marked by political and economic crises, social development was an issue of growing importance. Concerted action was required at the national and international levels to guarantee social equity, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and productive and equitably remunerated employment for all. One of the main objectives of his Government's current social policy was to safeguard the welfare of each employable citizen and his family, while improving the level of social assistance provided to the most vulnerable groups in the population. The objective was to move from a system of social dependency to a system of social guarantees.

74. Since achieving independence, Belarus had reformed its social welfare system. Its Parliament had adopted over a dozen laws on social affairs, particularly in the areas of employment, social welfare for disabled persons and social security benefits. The State had adopted and implemented an assistance programme for families, persons unable to work, disabled persons, war veterans, victims of the Chernobyl disaster and various vulnerable groups. It had also established a policy on youth that included employment and accommodation programmes. All of those activities included a gender perspective.

75. His delegation, which accorded particular attention to the situation of older persons, welcomed the recent declaration of the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The situation of older persons was a good indicator of a country's health. Belarus had adopted a plan to mark the Year and had designed a major programme to address the problems of older persons. Further, it had amended a number of legal provisions relating to war veterans and to institutions for older persons and the disabled. Belarus was also working to find the financial resources to reform the pensions system.

76. The results of international activities in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development had shown that Governments, international organizations and civil society still had a long way to go. His delegation welcomed the strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council and of the Commission for Social Development in the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the social domain. It welcomed the successful outcome of the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development and, in particular, supported the agreed conclusions on the promotion of social integration and the participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. Those conclusions would help to guide national efforts and international cooperation to promote social integration and welfare and to combat violence, crime, drugs and other phenomena which destroyed the fabric of society. His delegation was pleased to note that the agreed conclusions called on the international community to support reforms under way in countries in transition.

77. His delegation supported the decision to convene a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 devoted to an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. That evaluation should provide a new impetus to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and help to promote new initiatives. Belarus would participate actively in preparations for the special session.

78. His delegation was convinced that the struggle to overcome alienation, poverty and unemployment and to offer protection to vulnerable groups would be a long one. Innovative national and international action was required to resolve those problems. The technical and political resources already existed. What was required now was action.

79. **Ms. Hadar** (Israel) said that the right to participate as a full member of society was fundamental to the human condition and should not be denied to those who could not exercise that right without assistance. The law was the sole safeguard for people with disabilities. Israel had recently promulgated a law on equal rights for disabled persons, guaranteeing them the opportunity to live in dignity and freedom and to participate actively in all spheres of life, so that they might realize their full potential.

80. Commitment to such values ran deep in the history, heritage and culture of Israel. The State of Israel had been founded on the idea that man was created in the divine image. It was determined to reflect that principle, which was embedded in its most ancient texts, in its own society and laws.

81. Unfortunately, at present, over 10 per cent of Israelis lived with disabilities and 70 per cent of those with severe disabilities were unemployed. Out of 7,100 Israelis suffering from intellectual retardation who lived away from home, some 5,700 were institutionalized.

82. The law on equal rights for people with disabilities would help to correct the discrimination of the past. It clearly stated that affirmative action taken for that purpose did not constitute discrimination and guaranteed people with disabilities access to public services and facilities. The law prohibited discrimination in employment and working

conditions and required employers to take measures to allow people with disabilities to be adequately represented. By law, job advertisements could contain no conditions of a discriminatory nature, while the Labour Court had jurisdiction over cases involving infringement of the rights of disabled persons. In addition to legislation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was planning to launch a series of programmes aimed at employing or rehabilitating disabled persons.

83. As a result of all those efforts, Israel might become not only the land of milk and honey, but also a nation in which as yet untapped human potential could reach its full expression.

84. **Mr. Freire** (Portugal) associated himself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. He thanked the States Members of the United Nations for the support they had given to the initiative of the Portuguese Government in organizing the Lisbon World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which had been a successful experiment in partnership between the Portuguese Government and the United Nations.

85. The World Conference had been a direct response to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond which, in its paragraph 123, underlined the importance of international meetings under the aegis of the United Nations. It had provided an opportunity for exchanges of views and experience in searching for new solutions to youth problems. However, the Conference had not been an end in itself but a means of promoting implementation of the Programme of Action for Youth and, even if it was still premature to undertake an evaluation of its outcome, it already seemed that in that respect it had been a success. Portugal proposed that at the next session of the Commission for Social Development, in February 1999, a panel of experts be established as a follow-up measure. Portugal was convinced that in the coming year important decisions would be taken on the role to be assumed by the United Nations in follow-up of the recommendations and commitments adopted in Lisbon.

86. **Mr. Rim Yong Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that despite the efforts of the international community, which, on the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development and the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, had pledged to accelerate social integration and the struggle against poverty and unemployment, it had to be acknowledged that those problems, as well as those of disease, illiteracy and crime in its various forms, remained very serious. According to recent United Nations statistics, 1.3 billion people, one fifth of the world's population, were living in extreme poverty and 800 million had no access to basic health care.

87. Achieving the objective of social development meant getting rid of all forms of social inequalities and evils so as to enable all people to lead an independent and creative life with equal rights, and in particular to enjoy the right to stable employment and to benefit from social services such as health, education and training, so that everyone could be a genuine and full member of society. One condition for achieving that objective was the establishment and implementation of judicious and participatory national policies which reflected the needs of the popular masses.

88. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had always accorded particular attention to social development: it devoted itself to guaranteeing everyone a job, as well as free medical care and education. As a result of that policy, the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the younger generation, were leading stable and happy lives like a large family, in spite of the economic blockade imposed by external forces and the temporary difficulties caused by the natural disasters which had struck the country on a number of occasions in the past few years.

89. One of the most important means of accelerating social development was the strengthening of international cooperation, particularly with organizations of the United Nations system. In that connection, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea appreciated the assistance given to Member States by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization in the areas of health and education. However, the international financial bodies should increase their financial and technical assistance to the developing countries.

90. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea unreservedly supported the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 which would be devoted to an overall consideration and evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21.

91. **Ms. Mpe** (Botswana) said that 70 per cent of Botswana's population was under the age of 29, and more than one third was between 12 and 29 years of age. In view of their numbers and their special problems, it was essential to make greater efforts on behalf of young people so that they were able to contribute more to the future development of the country.

92. In 1996 Botswana had adopted a national youth policy, and it was currently preparing a national action plan. The youth empowerment strategy was part of a broader initiative on citizen empowerment and community development, which was reflected in a number of policy statements on education and youth.

93. The youth empowerment policy was based on recognition that young people suffered the most from unemployment, poor health services and HIV/AIDS, due to the fact that they lacked information and skills. Youth empowerment was essential because the youth of today were the leaders of tomorrow, and would be shaping the society that would be inherited by succeeding generations.

94. In conclusion, she invited the international community to subscribe to the Lisbon Declaration.

95. **Mr. Boisson** (Monaco) said that at the express request of the Sovereign Prince a home care service for persons over the age of 70 had been instituted on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons. The service provided home care which was in addition to the financial benefits.

96. The Health and Social Action Directorate had been given responsibility for coordinating the celebration of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 and drawing up a programme on the theme of "Towards a society for all ages" in cooperation with the Directorate of National Education, Youth and Sport, the Directorate of Cultural Affairs and NGOs.

97. Various activities were planned for older persons for the year 1999: lectures, sporting events, visits to various places in the Principality and competitions in educational establishments to enhance awareness of the theme of the International Year. Older persons themselves would be consulted about the measures that were needed to improve their circumstances. The Monaco authorities had always been anxious to improve the living environment of the population, and particularly the elderly. In addition, there was a plan to consult the elderly with a view to securing greater benefit from their experience and abilities. They might, for example, be given a greater role in promoting the use of the Monegasque language. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particular emphasis had been placed on article 27, which guaranteed to everyone the right to participate in cultural life: too often the elderly were excluded from that right, and the International Year of Older Persons should be seen as an opportunity to promote its application on their behalf.

98. It was not enough merely to improve the living conditions of older persons; they should also be given the wherewithal to remain active and to contribute to the progress of society, to which they had much to bring. Only by adopting that approach would it be possible to build a "society for all ages".

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/53/SR.6

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
26 November 1998
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 8 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hachani ..... (Tunisia)
later: Mr. Ball (Vice-Chairman) ..... (New Zealand)
later: Mr. Hachani (Chairman) ..... (Tunisia)

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98-81498 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 101: Crime prevention and criminal justice (A/53/3, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/380, 381 and 416; A/C.3/53/L.2, L.3 and L.4)

Agenda item 102: International drug control (A/53/3, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/129–E/1998/58, A/53/204, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/382,383 and 416)

1. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention) said that the international community's attitude to the drug issue had become radically different in the last year and that the idea of creating a drug-free world had gained new impetus. At its twentieth special session, the General Assembly had endorsed a global strategy to reduce illegal drug trafficking, abuse and production drastically by 2008. A commitment had been made to promote judicial cooperation, to counter money laundering and to halt the spread of amphetamine-type stimulants. Lastly, there was a belief that important successes could be achieved by working together in the field of international narcotics control, as had happened in Thailand, Bolivia, Turkey, the United States and Peru. Member States had agreed on measures to reduce the demand and supply of illegal drugs within a specific time-frame. The Political Declaration and the Action Plans adopted spelled out the new strategies that should be in place in time to achieve the objectives by 2008. Developed and developing countries alike were committed to addressing their drug problems. To that end, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) would help Governments turn the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction into a concrete plan of action and would gather more accurate data on the number of drug abusers, the types and methods of use, and production and consumption of drugs. In cooperation with some of the world's leading research institutions, UNDCP would also assist countries to develop prevention and treatment measures and promote best practices.

2. The international community had committed itself to reducing or eliminating illicit crops over the next 10 years; it was therefore crucial to provide alternative means of income-generation to those dependent upon such cultivation. A global project to monitor the illicit crops, making use of ground, aerial and satellite surveys, was being developed. It would be put into effect with the consent of Governments and in partnership with regional and international organizations. With the support of other international organizations, UNDCP and the Governments of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia were preparing to institute strategies that would ensure alternative development at the national level. In Myanmar, UNDCP was administering a crop-replacement programme and was setting up a system to monitor the extent of illicit cultivation. In Afghanistan, the UNDCP programme had slowed down owing to suspension of United Nations activities.

3. The rapid rise of abuse and production of amphetamine-type stimulants was a difficult problem to counter because many originated as legal medicines. A subregional infrastructure for dealing with stimulants was being developed in East Asia, where the problem was particularly acute. On the issue of money-laundering, measures had been taken to close the gap between nations that had strict laws and those that were more easily exploited because of their legal loopholes. The global programme against money-laundering sought to provide assistance in the fields of research, monitoring and technical cooperation.

4. Turning to crime prevention and criminal justice, he said that the Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP) had offered practical assistance to several countries on a wide variety of issues ranging from the rule of law to juvenile justice. Globalization had fostered the integration of the world's criminal enterprises. Yet organized crime was a historical phenomenon that could be defeated with the necessary resources and political determination. In recent years, Colombia had dismantled two of the most powerful criminal coalitions which had ever existed, and that had led to a substantial reduction of the amount of drug money in the Colombian economy. In South-East Asia and in Italy, the Governments had also had successes. Smaller, less visible organizations were now occupying the space left by the big criminal cartels of the 1980s. It was therefore necessary to attack the structural underpinnings of the major crime syndicates worldwide, taking those changes into account; and an international convention against transnational organized crime would be the ideal instrument for the purpose. It would open the doors to better cooperation among countries and would facilitate exchange of information and transfer of prisoners and proceedings. It should enable laws to be harmonized on issues such as participation in criminal organizations or conspiracies or the criminalization of money-laundering. A convention would also oblige States to ensure the protection of witnesses, the only way of persuading them to testify or provide information valuable in the investigation of cases. Moreover, a convention would contain strong measures to address trafficking in women and children, smuggling of migrants and illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms.

5. *Mr. Ball (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

6. **Mr. Sucharipa** (Austria) welcomed the optimism that emerged from the Executive Director's statement and asked for details concerning, first, the strong points and weak points of how the two programmes administered by the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention were cooperating with the United Nations system and, secondly, the efforts of the Office to elaborate indicators allowing the impact of the programmes to be measured.

7. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that terrorism had been almost unanimously condemned during the general debate of the current session of the General Assembly. Since the criminal aspect of terrorism fell under the mandate of the Office, he wished to know if the Office had enough funds and any plans for combating terrorism. Regarding the drug problem, considerable resources were devoted to reducing illicit drug supply and demand, whereas the serious problem of the diversion of chemical precursors did not seem to be getting the attention it needed. He therefore asked the Executive Director to specify what steps States could take to prevent the diversion of chemical products for the production of illicit drugs, and what assistance the Office could give in that connection.

8. **Mr. Afshari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Iran, a transit country for drugs, was sparing no efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking in its territory. He asked the Executive Director if specific projects were planned to counter the illicit cultivation of poppies and opiates in neighbouring countries. Despite the situation prevailing in Afghanistan, assurances had been given that UNDCP would support measures to ensure strict control of the Afghan borders with a view to halting narcotics trafficking. In order to combat drug trafficking in East Asia effectively, an effort must be made not only to reduce the supply in Afghanistan but also to strengthen the control capabilities of its neighbouring countries.

9. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention) said that the two programmes administered by his Office had had some definite successes. With regard to money-laundering, the fact of having specialists in the fields of both crime and drug control made it easier to coordinate activities and analyse the problems in depth. Consequently, the synergy between the two programmes, which would remain separate entities, would be reinforced. On the question of indicators, it was indeed difficult to implement the strategy adopted in June 1998 without having specific data at hand or the means of measuring the results obtained. A project to elaborate indicators and internationally accepted norms was therefore planned. Furthermore, the satellite surveillance system proposed by the Office would serve as the basic infrastructure for monitoring the supply situation.

10. As to terrorism, two experts would be appointed to study the question, monitor the application of the 12 conventions in force in the matter and make proposals for technical assistance. Where chemical precursors were concerned, the control capability of States had to be strengthened. A partnership between the Office, Governments and the private sector was therefore being set up, aimed at having the societies that produced the precursors become more closely involved in controlling them. In addition, the International Narcotics Control Board, having sufficient funds for the purpose, was following the situation in each country. The question of countering illicit cultivation touched on one of the two topics that had been central to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, namely, the need to adopt a strategy in that area. In that connection, specific plans had been developed in cooperation, in particular, with the Peruvian, Colombian and Bolivian Governments, to eliminate the cultivation of coca in the next 10 years.

11. Concerning Afghanistan, opium cultivation had increased despite the ban by the Taliban authorities. The elimination of poppy cultivation had to be a priority in Afghanistan, as did control of the borders. The international community must therefore provide financial and political assistance to that end.

12. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) stressed that it was futile to tackle the problem of the eradication and substitution of the illicit production of narcotic drugs without corresponding poverty eradication measures, as those two issues were closely linked. In that connection, his delegation, aware of the scarcity of resources available to UNDCP, wondered to what extent the Programme could successfully carry out its mandate, which included, *inter alia*, the implementation of substitution programmes that must be undertaken on a long-term basis with the cooperation of not only the countries concerned but also the entire international community. Turning to another vital aspect of international drug control, that of money-laundering, he said that his delegation wished to know whether UNDCP was cooperating with international financial institutions in that area with a view to concluding, where applicable, cooperation agreements whereby UNDCP would provide technical and advisory assistance to countries, particularly small countries with limited resources, in order to help them dismantle the highly sophisticated mechanisms used by money-laundering networks.

13. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) wondered whether the positive results obtained in the area of drug control were mainly benefiting those countries receiving bilateral aid for that purpose, e.g., certain Latin American countries, or whether they were also benefiting other countries, particularly the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Stressing the close linkage between drug trafficking and arms trafficking, she wondered whether drug control also helped to curb arms trafficking. Her delegation noted, moreover, that drug traffickers had always preferred to operate in conflict areas and wished to know whether UNDCP was cooperating with the peacekeeping operations in order to control that particular aspect of drug trafficking.

14. **Ms. Chigaga** (Zambia) requested more detailed information on the future of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the resources that would be allocated to it and the focus of its activities.

15. **Mr. Mukhopadhaya** (India) stressed that the linkages between arms trafficking and crime varied from country to country. There were certain extremely complex situations that could take the form of a particularly explosive combination involving extremism in various forms, arms production or trafficking, the lack of border controls, mercenary activities and terrorism. Thus, it was virtually impossible to combat such broad phenomena, assuming that their potential consequences could be anticipated. Moreover, drug trafficking was not always clandestine, since it enjoyed the complicity of certain Governments. His delegation was aware of the scarce resources available to UNDCP and recognized that they were not sufficient for it to expand such activities to areas such as combating terrorism. Therefore, in accordance with the reform programme elaborated by the Secretary-General, the Programme's capacities to control terrorism and other drug-related criminal activities must be strengthened.

16. **Mr. Bune** (Fiji) said that small island States were particularly vulnerable to the activities of transnational criminal organizations engaged in money laundering. His delegation therefore requested information on the activities that the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention was planning to launch in order to strengthen the technical capacities of small island States, particularly with regard to the formulation and implementation of legislation to combat the phenomenon, as stipulated in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, adopted in 1988.

17. **Mr. Arlacchi** (Executive Director of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention), replying to the representative of Pakistan, said that the thinking had evolved tremendously in the past four or five years. Crime prevention and the control of drug trafficking were, in fact, no longer viewed as isolated phenomena; on the contrary, they were part of the broader context of development and poverty eradication. Most States recognized that the main obstacles to their development were now, *inter alia*, drug trafficking, crime, money-laundering and corruption. Those problems must therefore be addressed jointly. Following the Office's lead, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank had also taken that approach.

18. While the Office's budget was small, given its mandate, he noted that it had increased since 1997. Nevertheless, he stressed that the crop substitution programmes were too ambitious to be carried out successfully with the limited resources available to the Office and that they must therefore rely on cooperation with other development partners. The Office could ensure the coordination of activities but was in no position to implement them. It could provide only about 10 per cent of the necessary resources for crop substitution programmes for Latin America.

19. The Centre for International Crime Prevention and UNDCP were conducting a joint programme to combat money-laundering, more than half of whose resources were devoted to providing technical assistance to vulnerable countries. Many countries were already benefiting from such assistance. Interested countries were invited to participate in the programme.

20. Replying to the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, which had requested more detailed information on UNDCP activities in sub-Saharan Africa, he said that, in addition to the offices already located in Senegal and Nigeria, a new regional office was to open in South Africa. Those offices were mainly responsible for questions relating to narcotic drugs but also, increasingly, problems relating to crime prevention. The organization of a large-scale training programme for African police was also planned. A study had recently been conducted on the linkages between poverty and drugs in Africa; its findings would form the basis for reshaping the Office strategy for Africa.

21. As far as the relationship between arms trafficking and narcotics was concerned, with the globalization of both the world economy and criminal and terrorist activities, it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between them. Today, criminal organizations had such enormous resources that they could destabilize an entire country. That was why the Centre and UNDCP planned to strengthen their cooperation and extend their activities to combating

terrorism. A new project under preparation was expected to serve as an early-warning mechanism to alert the international community when large-scale criminal activities or the parallel economy threatened to bring about an international crisis. As for the future of the Office itself, despite its small size and budget, it would focus its efforts on the most serious issues, mobilize support, particularly financial support, from Member States, and gradually expand its activities.

22. **Mr. Sucharipa** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, which aligned themselves with his statement, said that the European Union welcomed the restructuring of the branches of the United Nations Secretariat dealing with international drug control and crime prevention pursuant to the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his reform programme. The establishment of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) with its two organizational entities, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP), should create considerable and unprecedented synergies.

23. The European Union was gratified by the success of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York from 8 to 10 June 1998, and welcomed the important documents adopted on that occasion. The special session had re-emphasized the crucial role of UNDCP as the leading international agency in the global efforts to combat the world drug problem and had established additional mandates for UNDCP in various areas of drug control. The new activities implemented as a result of the expanded mandate would be financed from both the regular budget of the Organization and voluntary contributions. In that regard, the European Union and its member States, which currently provided more than 50 per cent of the contributions received by UNDCP, urged all countries that had not yet done so, to support the work of UNDCP through their contributions.

24. The European Union had taken note of the report of the Group of Experts which the Economic and Social Council had mandated in 1997 to undertake a comprehensive review of how the efforts against illicit drugs had evolved within the United Nations system since the creation of UNDCP. It looked forward to the Group's final report, which was scheduled to be submitted to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session and which should contain recommendations on how to strengthen international cooperation against illicit drugs.

25. The European Union attached special importance to the control of synthetic drugs and to the work carried out in that regard by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Abuse in close cooperation with the Europol Drugs Unit. The European Union had established an early-warning system for synthetic drugs in 1997. The entry into force of the Europol Convention on 1 October 1998 was a milestone in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime. Europol would be the European Union's central coordinating body for the exchange and analysis of criminal intelligence. The Action Plan on Organized Crime, adopted at the meeting of the European Council held in Amsterdam constituted the centrepiece of the European Union's endeavours to step up the fight against transnational organized crime. The European Union welcomed the progress made in the negotiations on an international convention against transnational organized crime, including three additional protocols. It had played an active role in the negotiations which had taken place in the framework of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, as well as in the Warsaw and Buenos Aires conferences, and looked forward to the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which was to be held in Austria. From 10 to 17 April 2000, the Vienna International Centre would host a series of meetings of ministers of justice, attorneys general, public prosecutors and representatives of non-governmental organizations and academia on the theme: "Crime and justice: meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century". Finally, while the European Union supported the valuable work carried out by the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, it wished to stress that the funds made available to the Programme were not commensurate with the mandate entrusted to it and that the Programme's budget should therefore be increased.

26. *Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.*

27. **Mr. Beers** (United States of America) said that drugs and international crime, which had dangerous links with each other, could both be fought at the same time and with the same weapons, such as appropriate legislation backed by national plans and international cooperation. Indeed, as the General Assembly had underscored at its twentieth special session, no nation was immune from that scourge and the international community could only succeed in combating it through cooperation. Progress had been achieved even before the special session since coca and opium cultivation had been reduced in the northern

hemisphere and in parts of Asia. In the United States, drug use was down 50 per cent from its peak in the mid 1980s. His delegation, however, remained concerned about the fact that drug abuse among young people not only remained extremely high but was also escalating on almost every continent.

28. Governments now faced the more insidious threat of powerful drug syndicates which controlled amounts of money that were greater than national budgets. In some heroin-producing countries, the authorities were using proceeds from the drug trade for political purposes and even for the development of infrastructure.

29. Pursuant to the commitments they had undertaken at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, countries had an obligation to combat and reduce the demand for illicit drugs and to treat drug addicts.

30. The United States therefore greatly appreciated the efforts of the Executive Director of ODCCP to assist countries to meet their obligations under the three Conventions relating to narcotics. At its special session, the General Assembly had given the Executive Director the mandate to develop a plan for eliminating illicit crops by the year 2008 and to support demand reduction efforts around the world; he should therefore be given the necessary resources. His Government hoped to increase its financial support to UNDCP significantly in 1999 and strongly urged other Governments to do likewise. The programmes should include monitoring and evaluation elements to ensure that they met the common goals of eliminating drug abuse, trafficking and production.

31. The efforts of UNDCP would not succeed without a strong national political will to eliminate the scourge of drugs. To that end, countries should develop national plans. Regional cooperation should also be increased and provision should be made for a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of national plans. The Western countries, which were well along the road to establishing such a mechanism, urged other regions to do likewise. Other United Nations organizations, such as UNDP, must also make drug control a priority in their aid programmes.

32. For the 1999 fiscal year, his Government had requested an anti-drug budget of $17 billion, $6 billion of which would be devoted to demand reduction. His Government's priority was to educate young people and their families and it had launched a $2 billion anti-drug youth media campaign. Domestic law enforcement efforts would also be strengthened in order to try to break the cycle of drugs and violence.

33. The anti-drug strategy should also target international sources of supply. Since 1993, United States efforts to support drug producing countries in combating the cartels and drug-related phenomena had produced good results. The war on international crime also required an honest, capable and impartial justice system and professional law enforcement services. That was why the United States had launched an international anti-crime strategy designed to deny a safe haven to international criminals. It was also providing assistance to train law enforcement personnel and judges throughout the world. For instance, the United States Government had established an International Law Enforcement Academy in Hungary to train officials from Central Europe and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union and a similar academy had been established in Thailand.

34. His delegation believed that the Centre for International Crime Prevention had a vital role to play and should be funded appropriately. It urged the United Nations to complete the drafting of a convention on transnational organized crime by the end of the year 2000, and urged the Committee to adopt the relevant resolution before it.

35. **Mr. Dlamini** (Swaziland), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/380. He expressed the Community's concern at the growth of transnational organized crime whose many facets and increasing sophistication threatened not only national and global security but also political stability and social and cultural values the world over. It was therefore necessary to continue implementation of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan, which provided guidance for Member States on ways and means to achieve the common goal set by the international community. The Community supported in particular the decision taken by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1998/14, to establish an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc committee for the purpose of elaborating a comprehensive international convention against transnational organized crime and of discussing the elaboration, as appropriate, of international instruments addressing trafficking in women and children and the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, components and ammunition.

36. The Community endorsed the proposed scheduling of a first meeting in January 1999, following the informal preparatory meeting of the ad hoc committee held in August/September 1998, with the possibility of a second meeting, if necessary, before the eighth session of the

Commission. The African Regional Ministerial Workshop on Organized Transnational Crime and Corruption held in Dakar, Senegal in July 1998 had resulted in the adoption of the Dakar Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Organized Transnational Crime and Corruption, whereby African States had resolved to: strengthen existing institutions and establish appropriate mechanisms for coordinating action at the national level; review, modernize and harmonize existing legislation; elaborate and adopt new laws and regulations; and upgrade the skills of those responsible for enforcing the law.

37. The successful accomplishment of those tasks would require adequate financial support, strengthened cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in order to review existing regional arrangements and mechanisms, the establishment or intensification of cooperation and the sharing of experience and information between law enforcement agencies. He therefore appealed to the international community to provide technical cooperation and support. He noted with gratitude that the United Nations system was already providing technical assistance and that some countries and United Nations agencies were assisting the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in its work or were ready to do so.

38. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Global Programme of Action (A/53/382), the Community was of the opinion that the efforts of the United Nations system, Member States and civil society to eliminate the drug problem must be intensified. The twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in the context of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse 1991–2000, had provided an opportunity to assess implementation of the Global Programme of Action and to debate further initiatives to solve the devastating problem of drug abuse. It had set target dates and time-frames for implementation of those strategies.

39. The Community appreciated the efforts which the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, continued to make in order to implement demand reduction programmes and organize public awareness campaigns. An agreement between UNDCP and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of OAU with regard to drug control had been signed. UNDCP would, over the next three years, provide support for a project aimed at implementing the Plan of Action on Drug Control in Africa adopted by OAU in 1996, which included the establishment of a fully functional drug control unit within the OAU secretariat.

40. The Community was gratified by the support provided by UNDCP, donors and various international organizations at the subregional level, and by their participation in the drug control conference held in Botswana in February 1998. That conference, which had reviewed the SADC regional drug control programme, had identified other possible areas of cooperation between the Community and interested international partners and had noted the lack of resources and of reliable statistics on drug abuse, production and trafficking in the subregion.

41. **Mrs. Moreno de Del Cueto** (Mexico) said that the success of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly had shown that, with imagination and the necessary political will, it was possible to establish the rules and strategies required in order to attain common objectives in the fight against a scourge which jeopardized the international community and respected no boundaries.

42. The President of Mexico was only too aware of the seriousness of the drug problem and of the need to adopt a new approach to obtain better results. The level at which Member States had been represented at the session and the quality of the documents adopted attested to the importance given to the need to cooperate to combat the drug problem. Her delegation was convinced that a united front was necessary but that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the principle of non-interference must not be violated. The General Assembly had spoken out against the adoption of unilateral measures and the imposition of sanctions and had declared that in the area of drugs, since responsibility was shared, it was appropriate to find joint solutions. Denying the real scope of the problem was tantamount to giving the drug traffickers a free hand. Demand, consumption, trafficking and production were inextricably linked. It was incumbent on the United Nations, and especially UNDCP, to play a vital role in the international fight.

43. The commitments undertaken during the special session must now be translated into action. First, a programme of action must be developed to deal with the problem of demand and to combat illicit trafficking in the precursors used to produce drugs. It was urgent that strict controls on the export of those precursors should be put into place, and both producers and consumers had responsibilities in that regard. As in preceding years, Mexico would introduce a draft resolution on the question of drugs.

44. Her delegation wished to stress the importance of elaborating, for adoption in the year 2000, an international convention against organized transnational crime and a number of other international instruments. The protocol on

the illicit manufacture of and trafficking in firearms was of special interest. On the American continent, 31 countries had acceded to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted in 1997 and already in force. Mexico had ratified that instrument and hoped that the other members of the Organization of American States would follow its example without delay. The Convention, which stressed cooperation, included a number of innovative measures which could serve as model practices, such as the compulsory marking of arms manufactured in or imported into a State party, requiring a licence to import, export or ship arms and the keeping of registers.

45. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries, said that the international drug problem, one of the most perturbing of the end of the century, continued to worsen despite the measures taken. Its effects, especially on young people, were increasingly alarming, yet organized transnational crime and its corollary, drug trafficking, continued to grow.

46. Accordingly, the Rio Group of countries had decided to coordinate efforts at the international level with a view to finding solutions to the problem. It had been thanks to the efforts of the Rio Group that the special session of the General Assembly had been held, and the Political Declaration, the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and the document on measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem contained some of the points which it had highlighted. The presence of ten heads of State from the Group at the special session was proof of their commitment to combat the scourges of drug trafficking, drug abuse and organized crime.

47. The Rio Group noted with satisfaction that the approach to international cooperation had been balanced, realistic, innovative and global, and that the extraterritorial application of domestic laws and recourse to sanctions against States had been rejected. The appeal to the international community for financial and technical support to developing countries had also been welcome. While it was clear that consumer countries could not win the war against drugs on their own, as long as demand was great and the market lucrative producer and transit countries would continue to serve as suppliers and transhipment points. For example, the 2,400 kilometres of Panama's coastline and its service economy made it an ideal location for the transit of drugs, but Panama had paid dearly. It had to combat a rise in drug addiction, seize drug shipments, adopt measures against money-laundering, and arrest and try international drug traffickers. That was, however, a war which it had not initiated. That did not mean, however, that Panama should cease its struggle against drug trafficking but, rather, that it was unfair that poor countries should continue to subsidize the richer countries of the world. Adequate financing should be provided for international drug control.

48. In order to attain the objectives for the years 2003 and 2008 set in the documents issued during the special session of the General Assembly on international drug control, and rid the twenty-first century of the scourge of drugs, States should be urged to accede to the three conventions on international drug control and to ratify them. Her delegation commended the high quality of the documents submitted by the Secretary-General and reaffirmed, as it had done at the twelfth summit meeting held in September 1998 and, the Second Summit of the Americas, its own determination and that of the Rio Group to combat the scourge of drugs, *inter alia*, by carrying out multilateral reviews of efforts deployed in that area.

49. **Mr. Kamitani** (Japan) said that international cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice had entered a new stage. It was no longer a matter of formulating standards for the treatment of offenders but rather of adopting firm measures to combat organized transnational crime. The elaboration of a convention against such crime was becoming more likely, and the General Assembly was expected to establish an ad hoc committee for that purpose during the current session. The Government of Japan wished to stress that, in view of the rapid pace of globalization, the fight against organized transnational crime should be accorded the highest priority, and it supported efforts to elaborate a convention and other international instruments. It firmly believed that firearms regulation and international cooperation among the competent authorities should be encouraged. The United Nations international study on firearm regulation and the regional workshops which had been held after its publication had been extremely useful. His Government also welcomed the elaboration of an international instrument to combat the illicit manufacture and trafficking in firearms.

50. The problem of drugs was among the most critical issues confronting the world today and it required a unified approach on the part of the international community. The twentieth special session of the General Assembly had played a crucial role in that regard. On that occasion, the need for cooperation, the adoption of an integrated and balanced approach, and the achievement of practical results had been recognized. Japan also attached great importance to measures taken to control amphetamine-type stimulants and drug abuse among young people. The use of such

stimulants was spreading rapidly, particularly among young people, because they could be manufactured easily and inexpensively. Although they were expected to pose the principal threat in the next century, their danger had not yet been fully recognized. Young people needed to be protected from drugs. The Japanese Government had instituted drug-abuse prevention classes in schools and its Drug-Abuse Prevention Centre was conducting a nationwide campaign entitled "Yes to life. No to drugs." That campaign not only raised awareness of the problem, but it also encouraged contributions which were, in turn, handed over to UNDCP to support drug-abuse efforts conducted by non-governmental organizations in developing countries.

51. The importance of international cooperation, in particular, through UNDCP, could not be over-emphasized. Japan had worked closely with the Programme and had made substantial contributions to its voluntary fund. It fully supported cooperation between international law enforcement organizations such as police and customs authorities.

52. **Mr. Xie Bohua** (China) said that, with increased international contacts and the speedy development of science and technology, many criminal activities transcended national borders and seriously affected the normal social order, political stability and the economic development of countries. It had therefore become essential to adopt measures to combat crime at the international level and, in that regard, the Chinese Government welcomed the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime adopted at the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime.

53. The supreme legislature in China had modified the country's criminal law in March 1997, incorporating provisions to combat organized crime. Chinese law enforcement organs had been actively involved in international cooperation with other law enforcement organs abroad and their efforts had been remarkably successful. By the end of 1997, China had signed bilateral judicial assistance treaties with 24 countries and had acceded to more than 20 international conventions. The Government was ready to strengthen its cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

54. China believed that the international convention against organized transnational crime which was to be prepared should take into account existing conventions against transnational crime and the basic principles governing judicial assistance given by various countries. It would also be useful to strengthen the role of the United Nations in combating organized crime by providing it with additional resources for that purpose to enable it to offer increased technical assistance to the developing countries which needed it the most. The Government firmly believed in the need to strengthen cooperation and international contacts, while respecting the principles of the equality and sovereignty of States in accordance with international law and for the greater good of all.

Agenda item 100: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/53/3, A/53/63–S/1998/100, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/97, A/53/294, A/53/350, A/53/356, A/53/378, A/53/416 and A/53/425)

55. **Mr. Mangaya Yange** (Democratic Republic of the Congo), said that, while he supported the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, he wished to make a few comments on ways of improving the social situation in developing countries, in particular in the least developed. The gap separating the developed and the developing countries had widened considerably, and economic upheaval and social marginalization would only aggravate the situation in the developing countries which had practically no sources of income and where social coverage, in most cases, was almost non-existent. Under those circumstances, the universality of social agreements which were so highly recommended could be realized only by taking into account the specific nature and living conditions in the two hemispheres.

56. Only substantial assistance would help the less affluent to improve their socio-economic situation, which would also benefit older persons, the disabled and young people, the population groups which were often neglected.

57. The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomed the proclamation of the International Year of Older Persons, and hoped that the special attention accorded to older persons would not be temporary. Specialized bodies should create appropriate mechanisms to benefit from the wisdom, knowledge and experience of older persons. In so doing, the concept of multigenerational citizenship would become a familiar one and the legacy of previous generations would enrich the capital of future generations.

58. The Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the recommendations formulated at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in August 1998 in Lisbon, and undertook, as soon as it had the means, to establish adequate mechanisms which would allow young

people, older persons and the disabled to enjoy more fully the quality of life they fully deserved.

59. **Mr. Malki** (Bahrain) said that in order to ensure social development, the State must endeavour to utilize the abilities of every member of society. Bahrain, for its part, had become one of the most advanced countries in the world from the point of view of social development, as shown by the fact that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had, for the fourth consecutive year, ranked it first among the Arab countries in its 1998 *Human Development Report*.

60. The family remained the cornerstone of society, particularly in Islamic countries, and the Koran required children to care for their parents, particularly during their old age. A National Commission on older persons had been established by ministerial decree; it was composed of representatives of the public and private sectors and was responsible for developing policies, projects and programmes on behalf of older persons and for proposing draft legislation to provide them with a decent standard of living. It was also responsible for cooperating with United Nations bodies working in that field and for considering the recommendations and resolutions resulting from Arab and international conferences. Many other governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations dealt with older persons. In anticipation of the International Year of Older Persons, Bahrain had established a special committee composed of representatives of governmental and private bodies and charitable organizations. A family protection association had been created in 1975 in order to disseminate information on family planning, reproductive health and sexual hygiene and to make women aware of their rights in that regard. The association's strategic plan of action focused largely on young people, to whom it provided guidance on marriage, family relations, health and reproductive health.

61. Bahrain had established a national foundation for the disabled, which was responsible, *inter alia*, for proposing public policies for the protection and training of disabled persons, developing draft legislation, carrying out specialized studies and preparing financing projects in cooperation with local, regional and national institutions working in the field.

62. Bahrain was endeavouring to offer medical services and education free of charge to its citizens and other residents in the country. It also provided public assistance to poor families. As a result of its efforts, the mortality rate of children under five years of age had remained at 2.3 per cent in 1996.

63. Bahrain had also established a national commission responsible for developing and implementing a national social development strategy on the basis of the principles set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration on social development.

64. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that underdevelopment was the underlying cause of social problems in many countries, particularly in Africa, and that one of those problems was clearly the ageing of the population since it was expected that people over the age of 60 would account for one third of the world's population in the next millennium and most of those people lived in developing countries. His delegation therefore welcomed the proclamation by the General Assembly of 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons and hoped that the Year would help to correct the widespread misconception that older persons were a burden on society (although their situation varied from country to country) and would make it possible for society to benefit from their experience, wisdom and knowledge. In Ethiopia, as in many other African countries, the family was traditionally responsible for the care of older persons; however, there was a danger that changing values might alter that situation. As the number of older persons continued to increase in Ethiopia, the Government had felt the need to establish a social development policy. In that regard, he noted that under the Ethiopian Constitution, the Government was required to endeavour to improve the living conditions of older persons. The official launching of the International Year of Older Persons had been duly observed in Ethiopia on 1 October 1998, and various consciousness-raising events had been organized on that occasion at the central and regional levels. Ethiopia had already established a national focal point for the Year; the regional administrative governments had formed their own committees in preparation for its observance; a two-day national workshop had been held in order to strengthen the network of charitable organizations caring for older persons; and focal point staff members were in the process of contacting governmental and non-governmental organizations.

65. His delegation welcomed the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which had recently been held in Lisbon.

66. In conclusion, he said that his delegation was ready to cooperate with the efforts of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system in the development of programmes and structures that were better adapted to the needs of older persons and it welcomed the emphasis placed on the need to focus particularly on the situation of older women. Since developing countries had limited resources with which to address social problems, he

urged on all Member States to exert maximum efforts to revitalize the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing during the year 1999, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

67. **Mr. Okoudjou** (Benin) said that his country, which had been engaged in a difficult process of economic reform for the past 10 years, was concerned about the social consequences of those reforms. Like many other countries, Benin was fully committed to the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and to the resolutions adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in August 1998, because it was convinced that the proposed measures would make it possible to attenuate the consequences of abject poverty to some extent.

68. His Government also welcomed the upcoming observance, in 1999, of the International Year of Older Persons, for which it had long been preparing. It had established a national organization committee and a programme based on consciousness-raising activities such as the dissemination of international legal instruments dealing with older persons and the organization of lectures, round tables, seminars, advertisements, campaigns and radio and television programmes. That initiative was part of the Government's own social policy of ensuring that the minimum basic needs of all citizens, regardless of gender, age or religion, were met. Since 1995, Benin had also established an annual National Older Persons' Day. Two associations for older persons had been created, but it had not yet been possible to fund their projects.

69. While it was true that social development was first and foremost the responsibility of the State, it was also true that international assistance was essential since it was only through joint efforts that poverty could be eradicated.

70. **Mr. Langmore** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) summarizing the discussion of agenda item 100, said that many of the delegations which had spoken had made specific recommendations either to Governments or to the United Nations system and that he, for his part, had taken note of those of particular interest to his Division. He thanked the Consultative Group for the International Year of Older Persons for its role in the preparation of the report (A/53/294) and the Portuguese Government for having hosted the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

71. **Mr. Young-sam Ma** (Republic of Korea) asked the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development whether the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had remained in contact with UNDP as requested by the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session, in order to consider the possibility of incorporating a development indicator on ageing into the *Human Development Report*.

72. **Mr. Langmore** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) said that his Division had indeed remained in contact with UNDP but that, as yet, no formal proposal had been made. The Commission on Social Development would take up the matter at its next session.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.